

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY

Number: 0400.0402.02

Date: 10/29/2012

Area: Personnel

Page: 1 of 6

Subject: Personal Appearance

Approved:

1.0 General:

Each representative of the fire district, when meeting members of the community, other public service agencies, or other fire district personnel, must remember that “they will not get a second chance to make a good first impression.” Keeping this in mind, it is important that all fire district personnel maintain a positive, professional appearance as defined herein. The value of appearance must not compromise the confidence instilled in those we serve.

2.0 Purpose:

It is the purpose of this policy to provide direction to all personnel with regard to personal appearance including personal grooming standards.

3.0 Scope:

This policy applies to all fire district members who, when representing the fire district, are in the presence of, or may otherwise contact the general public and/or other public agencies in the performance of his/her assigned duties.

4.0 Policy:

4.1 Definitions:

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue (NWFR): The employing agency and authority for this policy.

Member: Any individual who is employed by, or serves as a volunteer firefighter of the fire district and therefore, officially represents NWFR when performing his/her duties and responsibilities.

Paid Personnel: Those members who are identified as full time or part paid employees and who receive regular payment for the performance of his/her assigned duties and responsibilities.

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Volunteer Personnel: Those members who are not identified as employees yet serve the fire district in a volunteer capacity and who are compensated for his/her services using a stipend reimbursement scale.

Emergency Response Personnel: Those members who by their specific job description respond to emergency incidents and/or are otherwise responsible to conform to the Firefighter Safety Standards of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC 296-305).

Supervisory Personnel: Those individuals who by their respective job description are assigned the responsibility of supervising subordinate personnel.

4.2 Personal Appearance – General :

- 4.2.1 All members of NWFR shall present a professional appearance when in the presence of the general public and/or when officially representing the fire district including situations where members are participating in an emergency response.
- 4.2.2 Supervisory personnel shall be responsible for ensuring their assigned personnel satisfy the intent of this policy at all times, and shall make corrections to the improper personal appearance of subordinate members when such corrective action is deemed appropriate.

4.3 Hair Length and Style:

- 4.3.1 It is recognized that traditionally acceptable standards for female hairstyles differ considerably from those of males. Female hairstyles for emergency response personnel that would normally not conform to the standards outlined in this policy may be pinned up or secured in a manner as to comply with this policy while on duty. In such instances, the hair must be pinned up or secured at all times while on duty. In no case shall the height of hair exceed two (2) inches. Hair restraints such as bobby pins or barrettes shall be inconspicuous and shall blend with hair color. Hair styles cannot interfere with the safety provisions of helmets or other head protection equipment.

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- 4.3.2 Hairstyles for all other female employees will conform to an acceptable appearance for their position.
- 4.3.3 For emergency response personnel, hair should be trimmed in such a manner that permits the donning and doffing of any and all safety equipment without compromising the provisions of the safety equipment being worn. Hair length identified as possibly interfering with the safety provisions of the equipment being worn shall be immediately secured and contained to ensure the safety provisions of the equipment being worn are satisfied.
- 4.3.4 Hair length for male employees shall be such that it does not extend below the bottom of the uniform shirt collar while standing in an erect position. Hair may be pinned or worn in a way to keep hair above the bottom of the collar, provided such pinning or wearing does not exceed the two inch maximum height or otherwise compromise any safety equipment expected to be worn.
- 4.3.5 Hair length shall be of proper length and style or shall be secured and contained in such a manner so that when providing emergency medical care to a patient, the member's hair shall not come into contact with the patient.
- 4.3.6 If used, hair treatments or preparations (hair sprays, gels, etc) for both male and female personnel must not propagate flame or otherwise be of a flammable nature.
- 4.3.7 Hairstyles such as mohawks, exotic vivid colors, spiking, or other styling that distract from the professional and/or uniform appearance of any member, that causes a distraction, or draws undue attention to the member shall not be allowed.

4.4 Facial Hair

- 4.4.1 All personnel shall ensure that all facial hair is removed (clean shaven) prior to reporting for duty, with exceptions as identified herein.

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4.4.2 A member shall be considered “clean shaven” when facial hair is not substantially felt when rubbing a hand over the face.

4.4.3 Any facial hair that may interfere with the wearing of self-contained breathing apparatus, or any respiratory protection equipment approved by the fire district, shall not be allowed.

4.4.4 Other facial hair such as goatees, beards or chin whiskers shall not be permitted.

4.4.5 All facial hair must conform to Washington Administrative Code WAC 296-307-62010 Fit Testing

“Make sure during fit testing employees wear any safety equipment that could: Interfere with respirator fit - Examples of conditions that may interfere with the respirator seal or valve functions include:

Moustache, stubble, sideburns, bangs, hairline, and other types of facial hair in areas where the respirator face piece seals or that interfere with valve function;

Temple bars of corrective eyewear or headgear that extend through the face seal area

AND

Be worn in the workplace. - For example, chemical splash goggles.

Check, prior to fit testing for conditions that may interfere with the respirator seal or valve functions. If you find such conditions, do NOT conduct fit testing for that individual.”

4.5 Personal Hygiene

4.5.1 All members shall report for work bathed and clean. Cleanliness includes but is not limited to:

- Bathed and not emitting an offensive body odor
- Clean hands including fingers and fingernails
- Fingernails should be trimmed to an appropriate length to prevent injury to the care provider or the patient.

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- Clean hair
- Clean uniform/office attire as appropriate
- Clean/polished work shoes/boots

4.5.2 Members shall take appropriate measures to ensure that bad breath and/or offensive body odors do not offend those we serve.

4.5.3 Members shall not wear strong colognes, perfumes, or aftershaves.

4.6 Tattoos, Body Piercing, Cosmetics and Other Markings or Coloring:

4.6.1 No visible tattoos are authorized on the face, head or neck.

4.6.2 The display of any unprofessional or offensive tattoo or brand (nudity, violence, sexually explicit or vulgar art, words or phrases that are religious in nature, profane language, symbols to incite negative reactions, professing drug use, and initials or acronyms that represent criminal or oppressive organizations) while members are in uniform on duty and while wearing fire district regular work uniforms or dress uniforms is prohibited.

4.6.3 To ensure compliance with this policy, individuals desiring to have a visible tattoo shall provide a copy of the proposed tattoo and a description of the location to the fire district labor/management committee, and shall receive committee approval prior to obtaining the actual tattoo.

4.6.4 It is recognized that some tattoos may become more visible when the member is wearing uniform t-shirts during physical training or when temperatures allow the wearing of t-shirts as per the fire district "Uniform Policy." However, care shall be taken to ensure that tattoos that do not meet the intent of this policy are not visible.

4.6.5 Body piercing such as studs above the eyebrows, tongue piercing, that is visible to the general public shall not be permitted.

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- 4.6.6 Pierced earrings are permitted provided the earring(s) do not interfere with the safety and performance qualities of personal protective equipment, and/or provided the removal of personal protective equipment does not catch on the earring thus injuring the member.
- 4.6.7 Earrings, if worn by emergency response personnel, shall be limited to one earring per ear, shall only be allowed in the lower lobe of the ear and shall be small “stud” type earrings. Hoop, gauges or dangling type earrings shall not be permitted.
- 4.6.8 Emergency response personnel who wear cosmetics shall ensure the cosmetic material is safe to wear in a hazardous environment and will not injure the member if exposed to extreme heat.
- 4.6.9 Cosmetics shall be of a conservative nature and shall not include bold or brightly colored eyeliners, shadows, or highlighters. The wearing of cosmetics shall not draw undue attention to the member. Lipstick or other lip gloss, highlighters, or balms may only be worn by emergency response personnel if they do not cause harm to the member when in the presence of high concentrations of oxygen or other compressed air such as found in breathing apparatus.

5.0 References:

- Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 296-305-04501 (9a)
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 296-307-62010 Fit Testing)

Approved: _____

Chairman, Board of Fire
Commissioners
North Whatcom Fire & Rescue

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